



**AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES NEWSLETTER**  
**U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL HONG KONG**  
**January 2005**

Through the monthly American Citizens Services newsletter, the Consulate General provides security and other information of general interest to U.S. citizens in Hong Kong and Macau who have subscribed by registering with the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit and providing an email address or fax number.

If you believe others would benefit from receiving this newsletter, please forward it to them and encourage them to subscribe. To subscribe to receive our monthly newsletter and other updates, please register online by following this link <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs7.htm>. If you do not wish to receive this monthly newsletter, or would like to be removed from our email/fax list, please email us at [acshnk@yahoo.com](mailto:acshnk@yahoo.com) or follow the instructions at the bottom of this newsletter to unsubscribe.

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## **Asian Tsunami-related Information**

The Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004 caused devastation in the following regions: the northern and western parts of the Indonesian island of Sumatra (particularly the province of Aceh), the southern and eastern coastal areas of Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the southwestern and coastal areas of Thailand (encompassing the provinces of Phuket, Phang-Nga, and Krabi), the northwest coast of Malaysia (especially Penang and Langkawi), the southeastern coast of India (including the Andaman Islands), the western coast of Burma, the southern coast of Bangladesh, and the coastal regions of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Seychelles. For information from the U.S. Department of State, including how to inquire about the welfare or whereabouts of American citizens in areas affected by the tsunamis, click on the "Asian Tsunami Crisis" link at <http://travel.state.gov>. For information from the Hong Kong SAR government, including how to inquire about missing residents of Hong Kong, please direct your browser to <http://www.info.gov.hk/info/tsunamis/eng/>.

The State Department relies on emergency contact information in passports and records of registration at embassies and consulates worldwide to locate missing persons. Please make sure to fill in your emergency contact information on both passport application forms and inside the passport itself. To register with the U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong, please read the section below on "Internet Based Registration System" or go directly to <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/>. Thank you.

## **Macau Day: January 25, 2005 (Tuesday)**

On Tuesday, January 25, 2005, U.S. Consulate General staff will travel to Macau to provide American citizens services to U.S. citizens in Macau. Effective this year, in order to provide American citizens in Macau with greater access to services, Consulate General staff will be traveling to Macau once every two months. Services include citizens' registration (free), notary services (US\$30/HK\$240), and filing of passport applications (US\$40, US\$70, US\$55 or US\$85, depending on age and type). These services will be available from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Academy of Music, located at Rua de Santa Clara, No. 19, 2/F., adjacent to City Hall and near Catholic Social Services, Rua de Santa Clara 13, G/F, Macau. If you are physically challenged and/or require special arrangements to access this location, please call 2841-2211, 2841-2323, or 2841-2225. Thank you.

Blank visa pages may also be added to undamaged U.S. passports, free of charge, upon request. Additional visa pages will not be added to emergency passports issued at U.S. embassies/consulates or to damaged passports. Form DS-19 must be used to request additional visa pages. Form DS-19 is available on-line at <http://travel.state.gov> (under Printing Passport Application). For more information on procedures to replace damaged passports, please see consult our website at <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov>.

There are special requirements when applying for a new passport and/or adding visa pages for children under age 14. Please consult our website (<http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov>) for details.

- ☐ **Please bring exact cash (US or HK dollars) for any fee services you require.** Patacas will not be accepted.
- ☐ If you need extra pages for your passport, please fax us a copy of your passport's personal data page **by noon on January 21, 2005 (Friday)**. Please write "Macau – Extra Pages" at the top and fax to (852) 2845-4845.

- ❑ If you need a service not listed above, please contact us in advance at 2841-2211, 2841-2323, or 2841-2225. We may be able to bring with us what you need for that service.
- ❑ Please present your passport for any of the services you wish to receive.
- ❑ Please have your form(s) completed before requesting any passport services.

Please help us spread the word by sharing this notice with other U.S. citizens living in Macau. Thank you.

### **Foreign Service Written Examination: April 23, 2005**

The only administration of the Foreign Service Written Examination (FSWE) in 2005 will be on April 23, 2005. The FSWE will be offered in approximately 200 locations nationwide and at most of the locations where the U.S. has a diplomatic mission. For eligibility requirements and registration materials, please go to [www.careers.state.gov](http://www.careers.state.gov). Applications for the April 23 exam must be received by March 16, 2005 for foreign test sites, and March 23, 2005 for domestic test sites.

### **Current Travel Information**

On November 10, 2004, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security lowered the homeland security threat level for the financial services sectors in New York City, Northern New Jersey and Washington, D.C. from ORANGE (HIGH) to YELLOW (ELEVATED). The threat level for the rest of the nation remains at YELLOW (ELEVATED). Further information about the announcement may be obtained at the DHS Internet website at [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov) or [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

Since our last newsletter (December 2004), the Department of State has issued [Travel Warnings](#) and [Public Announcements](#) about travel to the following countries or areas:

East Africa, 12/29, Public Announcement  
 Libya 12/29, Travel Warning  
 Tsunami in Asia and East Africa, 12/28, Public Announcement  
 Indonesia, 12/27, Public Announcement  
 Sri Lanka and Maldives, 12/27, Public Announcement  
 Thailand, 12/27, Public Announcement  
 Bosnia and Herzegovina 12/27, Travel Warning  
 Kuwait, 12/23, Public Announcement  
 Indonesia 12/17, Travel Warning  
 Sudan 12/14, Travel Warning  
 Ukraine, 12/07, Public Announcement  
 Saudi Arabia 12/07, Travel Warning  
 Somalia 12/07, Travel Warning  
 Burundi 12/07, Travel Warning  
 Laos, 12/03, Public Announcement  
 Ghana, 12/03, Public Announcement  
 Cote d'Ivoire 12/03, Travel Warning

In addition to these Travel Warnings and Public Announcements, the State Department issues [Consular Information Sheets](#) for every country of the world with information on such matters as the health conditions, crime, unusual currency or entry requirements, any areas of instability, and the location of the nearest embassy or consulate in the country. The

Department of State published an updated Consular Information Sheet for the Hong Kong SAR on October 22, 2004 and for the Macau SAR on November 12, 2004.

The full texts of these and other current documents are available at the Department of State's website, <http://travel.state.gov>.

### **Internet-Based Registration System (IBRS)**

The State Department recently launched a new and much improved consular website, <http://travel.state.gov>. The website's appearance, usability and functionality have all been enhanced, and it has improved organization and navigational tools to help users find information more quickly and accurately.

An important new function is secure online travel registration, which will allow U.S. citizens (USCs) to record foreign trip and residence information that the Department of State can use to communicate with USCs and assist USCs in case of an emergency.

USCs around the world who travel or reside abroad can access this site either through a link on [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov), or directly, at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. The Department of State invites USCs to register themselves and their families and get acquainted with travel registration. If USCs are already registered with this consulate, the Department asks that they please re-register on line to update their records.

The new Internet travel registration service for USCs allows USCs to register and update their contact information on the Internet at any time, making it easier for USCs to keep their information current. The site also provides USCs with up-to-date travel information customized to the USC's unique travel agenda and itinerary. The data USCs provide is secured behind Department of State firewalls, accessed only by cleared personnel in Embassies, Consulates, and the Department of State, and releasable only with the USC's permission under the provisions of the Privacy Act.

Please let the Department know how you like the new site. If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about this travel registration website, please send an e-mail to [caibrs@state.gov](mailto:caibrs@state.gov). If USCs have specific questions about their registration with this consulate please contact us by email: [acshnk@yahoo.com](mailto:acshnk@yahoo.com).

### **Changes in Requirements for Passport Services for Minors Under Age 14**

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Effective July 2, 2001, U.S. law requires both parents' consent to passport services applications for minors under 14. This consent is normally established by the parents signing the application in front of a U.S. Consular officer. In addition, the parents must prove their parentage and custodial status and grant their consent every time a U.S. citizen child under age 14 applies for passport services. Parentage status may be established by an original or certified copy of the child's birth certificate listing both parents' full names. Custodial status may be proven by an original or certified copy of a court order. When only one parent is available to execute the application, that parent must provide, under penalty of perjury, documentary evidence demonstrating that he or she has sole legal custody of the child or has the written consent of the other parent to the issuance of the passport.

**Effective November 1, 2004, written consent must be notarized and provide unequivocal consent to passport issuance.** We can accept faxed copies of this consent statement, but the notary seal must be visible in the faxed copy. Exceptions to this

requirement may be made in special family circumstances or exigent circumstances necessitating the immediate travel of the child. U.S. citizens under age 14 applying for passports must appear in person at American Citizen Services. This requirement does not apply to requests for adding visa pages or other amendments to current U.S. passports.

### **How to Avoid Delays in Receiving Passport Services**

First and foremost, please come early to the ACS Unit. We open at 8:30AM and close at noon Monday through Friday, reopening at 1:30PM until 4:00PM except Wednesday afternoons plus local and U.S. holidays when we are closed. Customers who come closer to our opening hours, when we tend to have fewer customers, will receive faster service. Customers who come closer to our closing hours may need to wait longer as we assist customers who arrived earlier. Monday mornings and the day after holidays are especially busy times for us so if you seek non-emergency services you may wish to consider coming at other times/days.

Second, to provide equitable services to all customers we use a ticketing machine to call customers to the window in order of when they took the ticket. The ticketing machine is located at the entrance to the ACS waiting room. Please take a ticket when you enter and again if you have been given a form for completion such as adding pages or applying for a new passport (most forms are available on line at our website, <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov>, and we encourage customers to complete the relevant forms prior to requesting consular services).

Third, we have recently received applications for visa pages additions, passport renewals, emergency passports and other passport services that have been incomplete and thus delayed. We strongly advise U.S. citizens to plan travel in advance including any requirements or updates related to their travel documents. The most common reasons for delay:

- **Damaged Passports:** We cannot provide passport services such as adding visa pages to passports that are damaged. Traveling with a secure passport protects your personal security and protects U.S. national security. In addition, travelers using damaged passports may be detained, denied admission and/or otherwise inconvenienced when traveling abroad. Security features of a U.S. passport may be impacted by damage to the biographic/photograph page, deterioration to passport stitching due to multiple visa pages inserts etc. When a passport is damaged, a new passport application must be made. For more information, please see: <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs/damagedpassports.htm>.
- **Incorrect Photos:** We are often presented with photos that are too small, too dark, have an improper background, have a border or otherwise do not comply with current passport photo standards. For more details on current passport photo requirements, please see: [http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/composition\\_checklist.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/composition_checklist.html).
- **Special Requirements For Minor Children:** Passport services for minor children under 14 years old have special requirements enacted by the United States Congress due to concerns regarding international child abduction. Requirements often missing at the time of application are the child's presence (if applying for passports), the child's birth certificate, a birth certificate that contains incorrect or incomplete information, the current passport of the parents/legal guardians, consent letter from the non-applying parent, or court order that grants sole custody to the applying parent or court order specifically authorizing passport issuance to the minor regardless of custody. For

current requirements, please see:

<http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs/passports.htm>.

In summary, please keep your travel documents current and in good condition. Based on reasons including but limited to the above, we may not be able to provide services despite our wish to facilitate the travel of U.S. citizens. The information above describes the most common reasons for delay. For more information on passport processing and requirements, please see <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs/passports.htm>.

### **U.S. Passport & Consular Report of Birth Abroad Pickup Times and Place**

Effective October 5 U.S. citizens or their authorized messengers may pick up their new U.S. passport and/or Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) at the specially marked patio window by the Consulate General's public entrance from 2:00 – 4:00PM, Monday through Friday. The person collecting the documents must still present the date-stamped receipt and the applicant's current passport, if any. The current passport will be cancelled and returned to the person collecting the documents. This change in procedures means that persons just picking up these completed documents do not need to pass through the same security checks as other consular customers do to enter the Consulate building nor take a ticket to wait for ACS assistance. U.S. citizens needing to collect their passports or CRBAs outside of these hours should notify ACS in advance.

### **Collect Processed Passports ASAP to Avoid Reapplication Requirements**

The Consulate urges all U.S. citizens who have applied for new U.S. passports or CRBAs to collect those documents as close to the estimated pickup date as possible. We have a large inventory of uncollected passports awaiting collection. As we recently did, uncollected passports may be cancelled and returned to the Department of State; those applicants will need to reapply, including paying new fees, if they wish to receive a new passport.

### **U.S. Passports and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad Delivery by Hongkong Post**

Effective immediately, U.S. citizens have the option to receive their U.S. passport, Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) or other applicable American Citizens Services items by courier under the circumstances specified below. This optional service is provided by Hong Kong Post. If you wish to utilize this service, please go to the Hong Kong Post services window in the Non-Immigrant Visa waiting room located on the Ground Floor. You will need to pay all applicable fees to the Hong Kong Post on-site representative. **Please note that Consulate personnel cannot collect fees on behalf of Hong Kong Post and therefore this service is not available during Macau Day or other places/events outside of the Consulate.**

Fees are per piece (e.g. each passport or CRBA). The Hong Kong delivery fee is \$25HKD. The Macau delivery fee is \$65HKD. This service is offered as a convenience. Passport and CRBA fees collected with the application(s) cover the cost of processing the application(s) only.

U.S. citizens are eligible to receive their U.S. passport or CRBA by courier return if:

- The U.S. citizen is applying for a regular passport, visa pages, passport amendment or a CRBA;



- The U.S. citizen is present in Hong Kong or Macau at the time of application and when the requested items are delivered;
- The delivery address is in Hong Kong or Macau;
- If renewing a currently valid U.S. passport, the applicant's currently valid U.S. passport is cancelled during the application; and
- The U.S. citizen is currently registered with the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong. If the U.S. citizen is not registered, s/he may do so online at <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/consular/acs.htm>.

Courier return is **not** available for reasons including but not limited to:

- During the processing of a new U.S. passport, the applicant opts to retain a still valid U.S. passport. New passports can only be delivered after the prior passport is cancelled at the Consulate General.
- Emergency passports cannot be returned via courier; these are normally issued while the applicant waits.

#### *Other important items*

- When the passport application has been processed and the passport is ready for collection (usually ten calendar days), we will provide the passport(s) to Hong Kong Post for qualified applicants who chose courier return. The current delivery estimates are two days for Hong Kong delivery and three days for Macau delivery.
- The passport and/or CRBA will only be handled at the Hong Kong Post counter at the U.S. Consulate General or in Hong Kong Post premises to ensure security of the items. In the event an item is lost or stolen, Hong Kong Post may offer a maximum compensation of \$2,500HKD.
- The recipient must sign a delivery receipt. If no one is available, a notification card will be left for the addressee to inform him/her to call Hong Kong Post to arrange another delivery attempt or collection at one of the 130 Post Offices. If no response is received from the addressee within 1-2 days and if the second delivery attempt is unsuccessful, the items will be returned to the U.S. Consulate General.
- U.S. citizens who chose courier return and do not receive their documents within 30 days should contact Hong Kong Post at 2921-2211. Passports not collected from the U.S. Consulate General within one year after the application date will be cancelled and returned to the Department of State without refund to the applicant.
- Certain passport applicants may apply using the "Passport by mail" form. This form was designed for use in the U.S. but is used by overseas Embassies and Consulates to process applications. The fee paid with the "Passport by mail" form does not include mail or courier delivery for overseas applicants.

#### **Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures**

Please note that the Consulate will be closed on the following official holidays in 2005.

A - American Holiday, L - Local Holiday

January 17, 2005 (Monday)	Martin Luther King's Birthday	A
February 9, 2005 (Wednesday)	Lunar New Year's Day	L
February 10, 2005 (Thursday)	Second Day of the Lunar New Year	L
February 11, 2005 (Friday)	Third Day of the Lunar New Year	L
February 21, 2005 (Monday)	President's Day	A
March 25, 2005 (Friday)	Good Friday	L
March 28, 2005 (Monday)	Easter Monday	L

April 5, 2005 (Tuesday)	Ching Ming Festival	L
May 2, 2005 (Monday)	Labor Day	L
May 30, 2005 (Monday)	Memorial Day	A
July 1, 2005 (Friday)	HKSAR Establishment Day	L
July 4, 2005 (Monday)	Independence Day	A
September 5, 2005 (Monday)	Labor Day	A
September 19, 2005 (Monday)	day following Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival	L
October 10, 2005 (Monday)	Columbus Day	A
October 11, 2005 (Tuesday)	Chung Yeung Festival	L
November 11, 2005 (Friday)	Veterans Day	A
November 24, 2005 (Thursday)	Thanksgiving Day	A
December 26, 2005 (Monday)	Christmas Day observed	A/L
December 27, 2005 (Tuesday)	Second Weekday after Christmas Day	L

### **Other Internet Addresses of Interest to U.S. Citizens**

U.S. Federal Government: <http://www.firstgov.gov>  
U.S. Department of State, Consular Affairs: <http://travel.state.gov>  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security: <http://www.dhs.gov>  
U.S. Federal Aviation Administration: <http://www.faa.gov>  
U.S. Internal Revenue Service: <http://www.irs.gov>  
Social Security Administration: <http://www.ssa.gov>; SSA Newsletter: [www.ssa.gov/enews/](http://www.ssa.gov/enews/)  
Federal Voting Assistance: <http://www.fvap.gov>  
U.S. Customs & Border Protection: <http://www.cbp.gov> (for information including importation of household pets, animal and plant health inspection, etc)  
U.S. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov> (for information on food products, food safety and inspection service)  
Hong Kong Immigration Department: <http://www.immd.gov.hk>

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1. Click on the Reply button.
2. Replace the Subject field with the word REMOVE.
3. Click the Send button.

You will receive one final e-mail message confirming your removal.